

## BRIEF AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH OF ASSOCIATION CAREER

My first knowledge of the Young Men's Christian Association came through reading the Annual Report of the Montreal Bible Society which was, in those days, housed in the Young Men's Christian Association Building, Victoria Square, Montreal.

In 1883 a gauky country lad climbed a flight of stairs and walked into the Young Men's Christian Association, then located on Victoria Square, Montreal, seeking for a boarding house. In the long hallway leading from the stairway into a reading room he was met by the Secretary, Mr. D. A. Budge. The hand-shake was characteristic of the man. That and the cordial words had more than a passing influence. The effects remain until this day. The names of boarding houses were given and an invitation extended to attend the Saturday night Gospel meeting. From that time on none of these meetings were missed for the next ten years except when absent from the city. Largely through the influence of Mr. Budge, both in the Bible Class, personal workers' class and through private conversation, I was led to take part in meetings. One of the methods of securing an attendance at the Gospel Meeting was to distribute little invitation cards on the street corners and in the saloons. It was my privilege to have a part in this work and afterwards to direct it. I speak of it as a privilege because the various kinds of reception given to the little cards helped to develop Christian life and character. The Secretaryship of the Committee was given to me and afterwards the Chairmanship of the Sunday afternoon Bible class.

During these early years in Montreal the Sunday night Strangers' tea was originated. To this were invited the young men arriving in the city during the week and an endeavor was made to make them feel at home and then invite them to the churches. The soliciting of fruit, the purchasing of supplies, the laying of the tables, the getting tea ready and serving it was a part of my work of those days. I also took an active part in the boys' meetings which were under the leadership of Mr. Harold W. Buchanan.

At the outbreak of the Riel Rebellion in 1885 I enlisted with the Montreal Garrison Artillery as a full private in the rear rank. About three months were spent on active service. Our corps was the last called out and only went as far as Long Lake, Sask.

During my earlier days in Montreal I was apprenticed to the machinist trade. Force of circumstances, however, necessitated my leaving this, and after some shifting about secured a position in Drysdale & Co's. Book Store.

In 1888 after very deliberate consideration it was decided to enter Association service. Mr. Budge very carefully placed all the difficulties before me clearly. He endeavored to make it perfectly plain that it was not to a life of ease or luxury that I was being called. I applied for entrance to the Y.M.C.A. College at Springfield and was admitted as a student. An unexpected vacancy, however, occurred in the Montreal Association which led the Executive to offer me the Assistant Secretaryship. The salary was \$40.00 per month. It was accepted September 1st, 1888. The great Moody meetings and the building campaign were features of the work during these years.



I attended the Employed Officers' Conference at Orange, N.J. in 1889 and the Philadelphia Convention which followed immediately. Two years were spent as Assistant Secretary under the benign influence of Mr. Budge when application was again made for entrance to Springfield.

In the Fall of 1891 I was given the position of Right Guard on Stagg's famous Springfield football team. I captained one side of the initial basket-ball game under the direction of Dr. James Naismith.

During the vacation period of 1891 I returned to Montreal and took out to Jones' Island, about 40 miles north-west of Montreal in the Ottawa River, the first Montreal Boys' Camp. A very unfortunate circumstance occurred the first day we were under canvass. A lad named David Loudon while out swimming got beyond his depth and was drowned. Loudon came from one of the finest homes in Montreal. On the arrival of help the next day the camp was broken up and the site was never again used for this purpose.

On graduation in 1892 I accepted a call to the then new building in Montreal located on Dominion Square, taking charge of membership, finances, etc. The need of an outing resort was felt keenly by many of the young men, and a small group composed of W. H. Ball, John W. Ross, Will Wilson, myself and others formed a small syndicate to investigate the possibilities of securing an opening for a young men's camp. St. Agathe District was visited by four of us and two or three days spent investigating in different directions. As a result it was decided to locate the first camp at Lac la Croix and in 1894 the first group went out. It was then discovered that just a little further on there was a better location, and property with fishing privileges was secured at Lac St. Joseph. This camp has been operated ever since as a Y.M.C.A. camp. Within the past few years another property has been secured for the boys' camp.

In the early part of 1894 I received and accepted a call to the General Secretaryship of the Winnipeg Association and in June of that year succeeded Mr. Herbert Gill, becoming the third Secretary of this Association. The first was Mr. C. M. Copeland. The Association was then housed in rooms at 205 Alexander Ave. corner of Main Street. The organization had rendered splendid service to the young men coming to this city but at the time the cause was small and the finances in bad shape. The Free Press Company even refused to put through an order for printing until the money was in their hands. The rooms consisted of about 1,200 square feet on one floor and divided into office, reading room, parlor and meeting room. From almost the very beginning I took an active part in the general church life and especially evangelistic work. Westminster Church elected me to the eldership. A representative church committee of which the late pastor, Alexander Grant was Chairman, and of which I was Secretary, wrote repeatedly to Mr. D. L. Moody urging him to come to Winnipeg. Our appeal succeeded in 1897 and great meetings were held in the Brydon Rink on Princess Street.

Prior to my arrival some steps had already been taken to secure an Association Building for Winnipeg. The late Mr. R. J. Whittle had deposited \$1,000.00 in the bank on account of a \$5,000.00 subscription. The question of a building was constantly up for



discussion, but the necessary money was not available. A lot 88 X 132 was finally purchased at the corner of Portage Avenue and Smith Street and was held by trustees. About 1898 a move was made from Alexander Avenue to 528-1/2 Main Street. The rooms were new but not very well suited for Association work. The only physical work during this period was foot-ball led by Mr. D. M. Duncan.

Active canvassing for the proposed building was undertaken in 1898 and Mr. Geo. Browne was selected as architect. Not only was canvassing done in the city but Messrs. Whitla and Ashdown went East soliciting from concerns which had branches and did much business in the West. The building was started in 1899 and completed for the opening January 1st, 1901. The cost was \$100,000.00 plus the furnishings. The Secretarial Staff at the opening consisted of the General Secretary, Robert G. Horn, Boys' Work Secretary, Frank H. Ganton, Asst. Secretary and A. N. Jewett, Physical Director.

Prior to 1894 Messrs. C. M. Copeland, W. D. Bayley, R. D. Richardson and others had secured five islands in the Lake of the Woods situated about seven miles north-west from Kenora through the Devil's Gap. Their object was to establish the Lake of the Woods Institute for Bible Study and general conference work. My first visit was in July of 1894 and from that date on camps were promoted and held annually. At first these camps were for both sexes but in 1911 it was decided to limit the attendance to men and boys only. The little steamer "Pastime" had been purchased and used for transportation purposes. It was not used, however, after 1902. Practically all of the stock held by the Lake of the Woods Institute was in 1907 turned over to the Young Men's Christian Association of Winnipeg. The property consisted of five islands containing approximately 27 acres.

Included in the campaign budget of 1910 \$5,000.00 was allotted for the purchase of a launch and for camp improvements. A very fine, serviceable gasoline launch was built especially for the camp at a cost of \$3,000.00 and named "Neaniskos". With improvements, such as pavilion, small cottages in place of tents, and under the direction of W. A. Alldritt the popularity of the camp increased. The largest island was named "Copeland" after the first General Secretary of the Winnipeg Association. The smaller island to the east is called "Patton". The island lying to the north of "Copeland" was called "Sir George" after the founder of the Association. A beautiful island to the south of "Copeland" was named "Fleming" after the Secretary (at one time) of the Brandon Association, and a very little island to the north-west of "Copeland", scarcely more than a good rock, is called "Ball" after the one time Secretary at Calgary. The Camp itself was styled Camp Stephens in honor of the one who occupied the position of President for eight years. In 1914 185 boys and 128 men visited Camp Stephens. The restricting of this Camp for the use of men and boys only, led to the formation of the Methodist Literary and Athletic Association (M.L.A.) at the Lake of the Woods and the Presbyterian Athletic and Literary Association Camp (P.A. & L.A.) at Minaki. Under the leadership of Mr. Walter T. Hart the former has been a great success. The latter has hardly had time to develop into large proportions.

From 1915 to 1918 comparatively little use was made of the islands except for some boys' work, but with the close of the war steps were taken to not only put the islands to their full use, but



to hold a Summer School and Institute thus putting the property to the use for which it was intended in the earlier days. The great Winnipeg Strike of May and June 1919 made the carrying out of this plan impossible. It is hoped, however, that in 1920 the fond ambition of those who first bought the property will be realized and a school for Bible Study and general Association work will be held at this beautiful spot.

In 1901 a call came from the European Branch of the Association in Calcutta. Having long had the desire to serve in the Foreign field the invitation was accepted. Shortly before Christmas Mrs. Patton and I journeyed eastward, sailing from New York on December 27th of that year, reaching Calcutta on February 3rd of 1902. I plunged into the new work with all the energy allowable in that climate. The Central Building was in course of construction, while the "Foreign Branch" was housed in rented quarters on Esplanade. We resided at 86 College Street in the heart of the native quarter with Mr. J. Campbell White, Mr. B. R. Barber, Mr. F. W. Steinthal and others. In August, owing partly to the very damp condition of the building caused by reconstruction, I contracted Malarial fever. As soon as conditions permitted we made our first visit to Landour in the great Himalaya range of mountains. Five weeks restored me completely to health and I was glad to get back to the plains. The building at 25 Chowringhwe was completed and opened under the Presidency of Sir Andrew Fraser. Our living quarters were then moved to the new building which faced on the great Maidan of 1,200 acres, commonly called "The lungs of Calcutta". Mr. Campbell White who had been General Secretary for about seven years, retired in the Spring of 1903 and for the next year and a half I occupied the position of Acting General Secretary. During all of our residence in India Mrs. Patton suffered much because of climatic conditions. After consulting with three of the best doctors, it was decided that it would not be possible for her to remain in India. We left Calcutta by boat on February 4th, 1905 journeying eastward. At the request of Dr. John R. Mott we visited all of the City Associations in the farther East. I conferred with Boards of Directors and Committees and gave a great many addresses. Places visited were Rangoon, Mandalay, Penang, Port Swettenham, Singapore, Hongkong, Shanghai, Peking, Seoul, Moji, Nagasaki, Kobe, Kyoto, Osaka, Nagoya, Tokio and Yokohama. Opportunity was allowed for several little side trips for sight-seeing and pleasure. We landed in Vancouver in May 1905. Leaving Mrs. Patton in Winnipeg for medical treatment I proceeded to Ottawa and in June assumed the General Secretaryship of that Association. One of the pressing needs presented was that of a new building. After going into the situation it was decided to secure the services of Campaign Director, Mr. C. S. Ward. The first whirlwind campaign to be conducted in Canada was that of March 1906 in Ottawa. The objective was \$200,000.00 in ten days. Owing to the fact that a financial depression was announced just about that time, the task was a difficult one. At the end of the ninth day we were \$66,000.00 short, but the tenth day closed shortly after ten o'clock with the full amount pledged. Messrs. Jackson & Rosencrans of New York and Mr. J. Albert Ewart were retained as architects. The President of the Association, to whom is due great credit, was Mr. Gordon C. Edwards. A suitable lot was secured at the corner of Metcalf Street and Laurier Avenue, measuring 120 X 77 feet. The building exceeded



the estimates and cost \$270,000.00. Strikes delayed the completion so that it was not opened until the Summer of 1908.

Prior to my Secretaryship in Ottawa a very small camping place had been secured at Marshall's Bay on the Ottawa River. It was small, only accessible through another man's property, adjoined a marshy tract full of mosquitoes and was too much sheltered from the winds. Steps were taken to secure a suitable camping ground, especially for the boys of the Ottawa Association. Finally a beautiful, high, pine treed location was secured on Lac d'Or (Golden Lake) a little beyond Renfrew. With the exception of some time during the war period, this camp ground has been used regularly.

Repeated invitations to return to Winnipeg were refused until after the Ottawa Building was an assured success. The call then seemed too insistent to withstand and in January 1910, we returned to Winnipeg. The building which in 1901 was supposed to be suitable for at least 25 years had already proven to be too small and there was an urgent demand for a larger one. The citizens of the North End of the city, partly cut off by the C.P.R. tracks, showed that a building in that section of the city would render great service. Shortly after arrival, a Building Committee was appointed with Mr. J. H. Ashdown as Chairman. A survey of the city by local men and International Secretaries was made. A property had already been purchased on Vaughan Street a little north of Portage Avenue, measuring 155 X 120. As a result of the survey another property was purchased at the corner of Selkirk Avenue and Powers 66 X 100. For the purpose of carrying on a living-out-of-doors camp, property was also secured at Middle Church. Again the services of Mr. C. S. Ward were requisitioned and in November 1910 a Campaign was conducted for \$350,000.00. This added to the sale of the old property, gave a pledged amount of \$550,000.00. The campaigners were successful, Mr. Ashdown leading off with a conditional \$25,000.00. At the close of the campaign a further \$25,000.00 was raised for the Young Men's Christian Association. Messrs. Jackson & Rosenkrans and Mr. J.H.G. Russell were retained as architects. Owing to the conditions of the ground discovered below the surface, it was necessary to put down piles. This extra work, together with strikes delayed building operations and instead of the building being ready for occupancy in the Summer of 1912, it was not ready until the Spring of 1913. Messrs. Henry Birks & Sons, the purchasers of the Portage Avenue property, according to agreement, demanded the building for reconstruction. This forced the Association onto the street. For office purposes only we were temporarily housed in a corner of the new building. This was especially unfortunate as the first Dominion Convention of Young Men's Christian Associations was held in Winnipeg in November 1912. The gatherings were held in the Industrial Bureau. The building was informally opened to the public in the Spring of 1913. The cost of the whole building scheme was more than expected, and inability to collect some of the pledges left the Association about \$100,000.00 in debt. Because of unforeseen circumstances and conditions this was further increased by loss on operating expenses. The work really did not get started because of financial depression. Then the war broke out taking from us large numbers of members especially those who had been residents in the building. Because of the attitude of some of the Directors and an apparent desire to change the Executive head, I tendered my resignation which was accepted in September 1915. Being offered the Military Y.M.C.A. work for Winnipeg and vicinity it was accepted October 1st. This was not the first experience with soldiers. Dating back as early as 1889 I had had largely to do with work in volunteer camps



at La Prairie, St. John, Sherbrooke, Farnham and Rockcliffe. It was congenial work and offered large opportunities for service, besides it was helping to win the war. In May 1916 I was appointed Area Supervisor for M. D. No. 10 which included at that time the Province of Saskatchewan. To the soldiers in the Camps and Barracks, on troop trains and wherever groups of enlisted men were to be found, service was rendered as far as possible. In the latter part of May 1916 a sudden attack of appendicitis sent me to the hospital for six weeks, otherwise the Area Supervisorship was continued up to June 1918. In addition to the work for the soldiers, a great deal of time was spent in raising money for the home and Overseas work. During the Dominion-wide financial campaign of 1918 I was given charge of the work in Saskatchewan. The allotment was \$175,000.00 and the amount secured in cash was \$508,709.00. It was then decided by the National Council that I should follow up the financial work and Mr. J.H. Dawson was appointed Area Supervisor. Much of the time during these recent years has been spent on the road and away from home. It has been a privilege, however, to assist in this great enterprise in which we have been engaged, and it is highly gratifying to know from the best type of men that the work of the Association has been worth while.

*J. D. Patton*

*aug. 1919.*